

*On the Relationship between Tibetan Orthography and the Original Pronunciation of the Language.*—By THE REV. F. B. SHAWE, *Moravian Missionary in Ladak.*

[Read, November, 1893.]

[*Note.*—In the MS. of this paper Jaeschke's system of transliteration was followed. For typographical reasons, however, some slight changes proved necessary, which will, I hope, not be confusing to the student accustomed to use Jaeschke's system, and which are not intended to be understood as a new system of my own. For scientific purposes I consider Jaeschke's system to be the best of all I have hitherto met with.

The transliterations are shown in the following table:—

ཀ'	<i>ka</i> , <i>k</i> or <i>c</i> .	ཚ'	<i>tsa</i> , <i>ts</i> (parts).
ཁ'	<i>k'a</i> , aspirated <i>k</i> .	ཚ'	<i>ts'a</i> , aspirated <i>tsa</i> .
ག'	<i>ga</i> , hard English <i>g</i> ; when a mute prefix represented by <i>γ</i> .	ཛ'	<i>dza</i> , <i>ds</i> (guards).
ང'	<i>ña</i> , <i>ng</i> ( <i>pang</i> ).	མ'	<i>wa</i> , <i>w</i> .
ཅ'	<i>ça</i> , <i>ch</i> .	ཉ'	<i>zha</i> , <i>s</i> ( <i>leisure</i> ).
ཆ'	<i>ç'a</i> , aspirated <i>ça</i> .	ཊ'	<i>za</i> , <i>z</i> ( <i>zeal</i> ).
ཇ'	<i>ja</i> , <i>j</i> .	ཋ'	<i>.a</i> , (basis for vowels).
ག'	<i>nya</i> , French <i>gn</i> ( <i>campagne</i> ).	ཌ'	<i>ya</i> , <i>y</i> ( <i>yard</i> ).
ཏ'	<i>ta</i> , <i>t</i> .	ཎ'	<i>ra</i> , <i>r</i> .
ཉ'	<i>t'a</i> , aspirated <i>ta</i> .	ཏ'	<i>la</i> , <i>l</i> .
ད'	<i>da</i> , <i>d</i> .	ཐ'	<i>śa</i> , <i>sh</i> .
ན'	<i>na</i> , <i>n</i> .	ཕ'	<i>sa</i> , <i>s</i> ( <i>some</i> ).
པ'	<i>pa</i> , <i>p</i> .	ཇ'	<i>ha</i> , <i>h</i> .
ཕ'	<i>p'a</i> , aspirated <i>pa</i> .	མ'	<i>'a</i> (basis for vowels).
བ'	<i>ba</i> , <i>b</i> .	ད, ཏ, etc.,	are cerebrals.
མ'	<i>ma</i> , <i>m</i> .	Pronunciations spelled phonetically are enclosed by asterisks.]	

It is well-known that one of the great difficulties presented to the student of the Tibetan language is the pronunciation. Whilst there is no essential difference of opinion as to the articulation of each letter when taken individually, the greatest possible variety of pronunciation prevails as soon as letters are combined into words. The dialectical divisions and sub-divisions are almost all apparently more or less at variance with the orthography, most of all in the central provinces U-Tsang (བར་བྱ་ས་ཁའི་འབྲུག་པོ་). When, e. g., ལྷོ་པ་ *spyod-pa* is pronounced \**lä-pa*,\* ལྷོ་པ་ *smyon-pa* is pronounced \**nyöm-pa*,\* དབྱེར་ *dbyar* is pronounced \**yar*,\* བཅོམ་ལྷན་འདས་ *bcom-ldan-das* is pronounced \**com-dän dü*,\* as is the case in the central provinces, the student can easily get the idea, that the orthography, which now stands in the remotest possible relationship to the pronunciation, never did to any reasonable extent correspond to the spoken word. This opinion has indeed been expressed, of late years—unless I misunderstand him—by Babu Sarat Chandra Dás,<sup>1</sup> who is acquainted particularly with the central dialects just referred to.

Inquiries into the phonetics of the Tibetan language have been made, besides by Schiefner, Lepsius, and Czoma de Körös, notably by Jaeschke, who brought to bear on the matter an ear trained by the study of many languages to distinguish the smallest variations of pronunciation, coupled with an infinite patience in continually revising and comparing apparently well-ascertained facts. Jaeschke embodied the results of his observations in an essay "Ueber die Phonetik der Tibetischen Sprache"<sup>2</sup> and in the "Introduction" to his "Tibetan-English Dictionary."<sup>3</sup> The following remarks are based upon these two essays.

My object, however, is not, as was Jaeschke's, to enquire into the whole question of Tibetan phonetics, but simply to bring together what evidence we seem to have, especially in the western dialects, as to the original relationship of Tibetan spelling and pronunciation. An absolutely conclusive argument on this point cannot at present be given. To attempt it would pre-suppose an exhaustive practical and scientific acquaintance with the whole system of Tibetan dialects, besides Chinese and

<sup>1</sup> S. Ch. D., "The Sacred and Ornamental Characters of Tibet," *J. A. S. B.*, 1888, Pt. I, No. 2, p. 43:—"It does not appear to me, that the Tibetans ever pronounced their words as they wrote them."

<sup>2</sup> In the "Monatsbericht der Königl. Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin," 1866. Re-printed as a pamphlet.

<sup>3</sup> London, 1881.—The labour involved in compiling the invaluable "Phonetic Table" on pp. XVI—XXI can only be appreciated by those who have attempted to trace a few words through dialectical variations often quite imperceptible to the untrained ear of a newly arrived foreigner.

Sanalvit, to assist in its study to follow the influences exerted by these languages, especially by the former. At the present stage of our acquaintance with Tibetan, such comparative knowledge is not indispensable, I would not wish to detract entirely from the modern studies and the internal systems of the classical works, although referring to the eastern and western dialects only when comparison is necessary.

Finally, represent the peculiarities of the sound system primarily within regard to: 1. A highly abbreviated notation of such components, both in the beginning and end of the syllable. 2. Metathesis of vowels, the latter depending on the position of components. 3. A large number of components of consonants particularly finality, many of them being retroflexive.

As the tendency of all languages is to lose vowels, and as all kinds of vowels, the fact that there are many mute consonants need not be itself cause for alarm. We shall find Sanskrit languages, as the French and English, that such apparent deficiencies in modern pronunciation are more explicable and pardonable than in the study of the letters of these languages. The modification of vowel-sounds is also a well known process, but the wholesale smoothing away and shifting of consonants, which has taken place in Tibetan pronunciation, is, for the least of it, a thoroughly surprising character. The order which has been observed with respect to other languages does not seem to hold good in this case. In numerous cases the consonants seem to have quite lost the place they originally appear to have had, so that the present order and position, surely and also in the orthography, will require, according to rules to be applied, that the present order is in favour of the original orthography really representing the original pronunciation. Your recent remarks must be brought forward to induce us to abandon the method followed in the latter by retaining what we know of the orthography of other languages.

In dealing with the general language possibilities in the Tibetan language, it is to be borne in mind, that the Tibetan language itself, like all other languages, has a large number of words which are not found in any other language. The orthography, however, is that of the Tibetan language, and it is only in the case of such words, which are not found in any other language, that the orthography of the original language is to be followed. The orthography of the original language is to be followed in the case of such words, which are not found in any other language, and it is only in the case of such words, which are not found in any other language, that the orthography of the original language is to be followed.

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literature had its beginning in the translations of the Buddhist canon, nominally the religious norm, even at the present day, for the overwhelming majority of the Tibetan-speaking race.<sup>1</sup> The restraining influence on the language exerted in Christian countries by a universally accepted translation of the Bible is well-known; in Tibetan we have a similar work standing at the very beginning of literature. Consequently, whilst in most languages the gradual development of orthography and pronunciation can be traced by a more or less complete chain of literary productions, Tibetan orthography has remained stationary, whilst the pronunciation has undergone great modifications. For, so far from finding any remarkable facts pointing to an original discrepancy between orthography and pronunciation, we have a series of observations which all point to the conclusion that the latter has, either gradually, or suddenly, divorced itself from the former.

These observations are made both in the literary language (ཚོས་སྐད་ *ð'os-skad*) and in the popular dialects (ཕམ་སྐད་ *p'al-skad*).

Turning our attention first to the *literary language*, we can conveniently enquire into the original relationship between orthography and pronunciation by investigating the homophones and the grammatical particles or post-positions, which supply the place of flexions.

*Postposit.*

On hearing Tibetan spoken, the student cannot fail to be struck by the large number of homophones. In some cases the homophonous appearance is genuine, *i. e.*, there are a number of words identical in spelling and pronunciation, but differing in meaning. In the majority of cases, however, an enquiry into the orthography reveals the fact, that many apparent homophones need not necessarily be homophonous. Whilst identical to the ear, they are orthographically clearly distinguished to the eye. These homophones resolve themselves into two classes:—those having an identical or similar root, and those having differing or dissimilar roots.

The first class consists mainly of verbs. In the literary language the active and neuter forms of the verb are rarely identical, whilst no difference is at present made in pronunciation. We have, *e. g.*, the neuter verb འགྲུབ་པ་ *grub-pa* “to be accomplished,” with Perf. ལྷུབ་

*Verbs  
activum neuter?  
nicht identisch*

<sup>1</sup> It is also interesting to note that the influence of Buddhism has secured the adoption of Buddhist terms for the commonest things, *e. g.*, the only words in use for “world” are སྤོང་པ་ *srid-pa*, (*i. e.*, “*bhava*”—of very rare occurrence) and འཇིག་རྟེན་ *jig-rten*, (*i. e.*, “receptacle of the perishable,”—the common term), both of which are evidently of Buddhist origin. What word was in use previous to the introduction of Buddhism?

*grub*; the corresponding active verb “to complete” is སྒུབ་པ་ *sgrub-pa*, with the Perf. བསྒུབས་ *bsgrubs*, the Fut. བསྒུབ་ *bsgrub*, and the Imper. སྒུབ་(ས་)་ *sgrub(s)*. Here we have at least five different orthographical forms, all derived from the same root and all pronounced alike \**dup*.\* Again: འབྲེལ་བ་ *byor-ba*, neut. “to adhere to,” and སྦྱེལ་བ་ *sbyor-ba*, act, “to affix,” both pronounced \**jor-wa*\* (or sometimes \**çor-wa*\*). The neuter form has the alternative reading འབྲེལ་བ་ *byar-ba*, whilst the Perf. and Fut. of the active form is སྦྱེལ་བ་ *sbyar-ba*, both pronounced \**jar-wa*.\* Again:—འདུབ་བ་ *du-ba*, neut. “to come together;” Perf. འདུས་ *dus*; སྐྱུད་པ་ *sdud-pa*, act “to assemble,” Perf. བསྐྱུས་ *bsdus*, Fut. བསྐྱུ་ *bsdu*, Imper. བསྐྱུ་ *bsdu* or བསྐྱུས་ *bsdus*. The pronunciation in central Tibet of five of these forms is identical, \**dü*.\* Slightly different is the case of the verb འཇུག་པ་ *jug-pa*, which is both neuter “to enter” and active “to put into.” The neuter verb has Perf. ལྷུགས་ *zhugs*, whilst the active verb has Perf. བཟུག་ *bèug*, Fut. ལྷུག་པ་ *γzhug*, Imper. ལྷུག་ *è'ug*. In this case the identical orthography of the Present gives way to a marked difference in the Perfects, whilst the neuter Perf. (*zhugs*) and the active future (*γzhug*) are identical in pronunciation, \**γzhuk*.\* Again slightly different is བཏུང་བ་ *γtoñ-ba* “to give,” Perf. བཏང་ *btañ*, Fut. བཏང་ *γtañ*; both Perf. and Fut. are pronounced “*tañ*.”

Such examples could easily be amplified; the “list of the more frequent verbs” in Jaeschke’s Grammar<sup>1</sup> suggests many more. But the above will suffice to illustrate the remarkable fact, that though homophonous verbal forms are frequent, they are almost invariably carefully differentiated by the orthography. The question at once arises, what the reason of this peculiarity may be. Do these detailed orthographical distinctions rest upon the basis of actual articulation current at the time the language became literary, or are they merely grammatical refinements? Though not probable, it is certainly possible, that the latter may be the case. The intricacies of Buddhist philosophy require for their correct expression accurately distinguishable verbal forms, and it is not impossible that the translators, accustomed to the rich structure of Sanscrit, found themselves obliged to make artificial distinctions, where the language at their disposal did not supply them. They might therefore have adopted the use of mute prefixed and superscribed letters to

<sup>1</sup> 2nd Ed., p. 99 and ff.

make such distinctions perceptible at least to the eye, whilst they were then, and have since usually remained, imperceptible to the ear. At the same time it must be remarked, that neuter and active verbs are otherwise almost always distinguished by the use of two of the three forms of the guttural, palatal, etc., letters, *e. g.*, འདོན་པ་ *don-pa*, act. “to cause to come forth;” འདོན་པ་ *t'on-pa*, neut. “to come out.” It seems therefore probable that such distinctions were originally inherent in the language.

Turning to the second class, homophones from different or dissimilar roots, we find some verbs here also, *e. g.*, འབྲིན་པ་ *byin-pa* “to draw out” and སྤྱིན་པ་ *sbyin-pa* “to give,” both pronounced alike in most dialects as \**jin-pa*,\* whilst they are derived from totally different roots, the neuter form of *byin-pa* being *byuñ-ba*. Further མོ་བ་ *rmo-ba* “to plough,” མོ་བ་ *smo-ba* “to say,” both pronounced \**mo-wa*;\* ཁ་དྲ་པ་ *k'ad-pa* “to approach,” ཁ་དྲ་པ་ *k'ad-pa* “to stumble,” both pronounced \**k'at-pa*\* or \**k'ä-pa*.\* Very striking are ཐེད་པ་ *byed-pa* “to do,” རྗེད་པ་ *rjed-pa* “to forget,” འབྲེད་པ་ *byed-pa* “to open;” all three are quite distinct in etymology, but the pronunciation of all is usually identical, *viz.* \**jet-pa*\* or \**jě-pa*.\* The greater number of homophones of this class are, however, found amongst the substantives. So ལྷང་ *ltañ* “bale of goods,” ལྷང་ས་ *stañs* “gesture,” both usually pronounced \**tañ*;\* རྩེ་ལ་ *rte-u* “foal,” རྩེ་ལ་ *ste-u* “small adze,” both pronounced \**teu*;\* བཙམ་ལ་ *btsa* “rust,” རྩེ་ལ་ *rtswa* “grass,” རྩེ་ལ་ *rtsa* “root,” all pronounced \**tša*.\* Also: ཡང་ *yañ* “again,” གཡང་ *gyañ* “happiness,” both pronounced \**yañ*;\* ཡར་ལ་ *yar* “upwards,” དབུའ་ *dbyar* “summer,” both pronounced \**yar*;\* ལུང་ *luñ* “precept,” ལུང་ *kluñ* “river,” ལུང་ *rluñ* “wind,” ལུང་ས་ *kluñs* “cultivated land,” all usually pronounced \**luñ*;\* ལོག་ལ་ *log* “back” (adv.), ལོག་ལ་ *glog* “lightning,” ལོག་ལ་ *logs* “side,” ལོག་ལ་པ་ *klog-pa* “to read,” ལོག་ལ་པ་ *rlog-pa* “to destroy,” ལོག་ལ་པ་ *slog-pa* “to turn,” all pronounced \**lok*\* or \**lö*;\* གམ་ལ་ *nam* “when?” གམ་ལ་ *γnam* “heaven” གམ་ལ་ *rnams* (sign of the plural), all pronounced \**nam*.\* In all these cases it can hardly be maintained, that there was any absolute necessity for introducing a different spelling for the same sounds, as the context would clearly show which signification was intended.

Still more important are a few homophones, which may be used in addressing superiors or signify something common, according to the manner of spelling. Such is, *e. g.*, ཅམ་ལ་ *c'ag* “dry fodder, grain” and ཅམ་ལ་

*p'yag* "hand," both pronounced \*č'ak.\* ལྔ་ལྔ་ *p'yag* is used in numerous expressions of politeness, the Buddhas and saints being revered with the phrase: *p'yag t'sal-lo*. The original absolute identity of these words can scarcely be considered probable. Still less is the identity probable in the case of རྩེ་ *rje* "lord" and མཛེ་ *mje* "penis," both now pronounced alike, \*je.\* The former word is applied only to deities, higher lamas, and laics of a very high rank. Can we suppose that such a word can originally (contemporaneously with the introduction of the alphabet) have been homophonous with a word having an obscene signification?

*Gram. Particles*  
*Postposit.* In considering the grammatical particles or post-positions a few examples will suffice. According to rule, the post-position of the instrumental case is to be spelled *kyis* after the letters *d, b, s,* and *gyis* after *n, m, r, l*. Similarly the genitive case is indicated by *kyi* after *d, b, s,* and by *gyi* after *n, m, r, l*. The reason for these changes in the ending is evident. According to Tibetan pronunciation final *d, b, s* are essentially hard, and consequently occasion a hard pronunciation of the initial consonant of the following syllable; *n, m, r, l* are soft, causing a corresponding softening of the following letter. At the present day མི་རྣམས་ཀྱི་ *mi-rnams-kyi* "of the men," and མི་རྣམས་ཀྱིས་ *mi-rnams-kyis* "the men" (instrum.) are pronounced \**mi-nam-gyi*\* and \**mi-nam-gyis*\*, i. e., the elision of the *s* and consequent appearance of a soft consonant at the close of the previous syllable at once occasions a corresponding softening of the following letter. But although this is always the case in speech, it is practically never the case in writing. On the contrary, the accuracy with which these forms are written is remarkable, and a MS. in which they are not correctly written will show other marks of being the work of an unusually illiterate copyist. In close analogy, the word ཡང་ *yañ* "and" becomes ལྔ་ *kyañ* after the letters *g, d, b, s,* a change rigorously observed in writing, although, e. g., an educated man unhesitatingly reads ལྔ་རྣམས་ལྔ་ *zur-nas kyañ* as \**zur-nä yañ*.\* Similar variable endings in connection with verbal forms are as regularly adhered to in writing as they are discarded in reading and daily speech.

*Summary:* The above observations on the literary language may be summed up in the following:—Whilst many identically pronounced words are spelled identically, many more are spelled in a more or less widely differing manner in accordance with the differing significations; and whilst certain rules of the language cause a modification in pronouncing certain syllables, the identical rule prevents the modification from taking place in writing. This seems to speak most strongly in favour of the literary language

of the theory, that the orthography corresponds to the actual pronunciation of the language at the time of the invention of the alphabet. Or is it probable, that the language originally contained such a large proportion of pure homophones, and was reduced to the necessity of naming the most widely different things by the same sound? Such is to some extent the case in Chinese, where, however, the practice of intoning or singing pronunciation has made a way out of ensuing difficulties. In Tibetan, however, only the rudiments of this method can be traced and seem to be due to Chinese influence.<sup>1</sup> Nor do the high and low tones now in use in the Central Provinces materially reduce the number of homophones. Or is it, thirdly, conceivable, that *T'on-mi Sam-bho-ta* and his successors deliberately introduced all these multitudinous variations in spelling? The language existed before the alphabet, and an arbitrary fixation of the orthography would have been a failure. An attempt has lately been made in Germany to approximate, by Act of Parliament, the orthography to the modern German pronunciation (a very much simpler task than that of the early Tibetan literati), but the experiment can hardly be considered a success. The experts were unable to agree, and the result is, that what is orthographically correct in Prussia is possibly wrong in Bavaria. This would have been the case to a much greater degree in Tibet, where each translator would have been at perfect liberty to form his own orthography. Such arbitrary attempts to regulate a language cannot succeed, unless all learning is in the hands of a small and select caste, bent on securing its own privileges. We find no traces of any such attempt on the part of the early propagators of Buddhism in Tibet; on the contrary, they seem to have encouraged popular education by all means in their power. And even supposing that the *lo-tsa-ba* had introduced differentiating orthography, why were not all the homophones thus treated? What ideas could have governed the choice they made? Again, the usage of grammatical forms as shown above, is evidently the result of actual observation and not of theory. Tibetan grammarians were not sufficiently schooled to make this probable.<sup>2</sup> There seems to be only one way of extricating ourselves from these difficulties, *viz.*, by acknowledging that the orthography as it stands did at the time of its introduction represent the actual pronunciation.

<sup>1</sup> Jaeschke. *Phonetik*, p. 166 ff. *Dictionary*, p. xiii, and *Phonetic Table*.

<sup>2</sup> A Tibetan Reader in my possession classes the letters as follows:—Guttural: *k, k', g, ŋ, .a, h, 'a*. Palatal: *ç, ç', j, ny, ts, t's, dz, zh, y, s'*. Dental: *t, t', d, n, z, l, s*. Labial: *p, p', b, m, w*. Lingual: *r*—a classification that seems very rude and singular to our ideas. Tibetan grammarians also assign either the masculine, feminine or neuter gender to each of the consonants—a piece of mere childish pedantry. V. Jaeschke, *Dictionary*, s. v. *p'o*.



But against this view is urged, that Tibetans were “unaccustomed to pronounce polysyllables and combinations of several consonants with one vowel.”<sup>1</sup> I do not think that this is really the case. At any rate it is hard to see how we are to know this. At the present day inhabitants of the central provinces certainly do not pronounce a combination of several consonants with one vowel, but have reduced nearly all combinations to simple forms. This is, however, only habit, for I have convinced myself by actual experiment, that Tibetans of U and Tsang can pronounce most complicated combinations. Nor can it be said, that some combinations are absolutely unpronounceable. Jaeschke<sup>2</sup> cites quite as difficult combinations from the Polish language, and the Welsh language offers similar parallels. Finally, we have the curious fact, that in some dialects a more or less literal pronunciation actually does take place at the present day, as will be presently shown.

Dialects

We now turn, therefore, to the *dialects* with all the more confidence, as we know what very valuable materials European dialects have supplied to the philologist. Nor are we disappointed, for a slight attention to them reveals some very interesting facts.

Taking first the Central Tibetan dialects, which at present stand more at variance with the orthography than any others, we find peculiarities, which seem to be remnants of a former literal pronunciation. According to ordinary usage, the affix *p* in verbs and adjectives is softened into *b*—pronounced \**w*\*—after a vowel. In Central Tibet, however, when a final consonant of the root is elided, thus leaving a vocalic tone at the end of the syllable, the *p* is usually not softened, but retains its original form. Thus: གཅེས་པ་ *γ̄ces-pa* “beloved” is pronounced \**ç̄e-pa*\* and not, as would be expected, \**ç̄e-wa*\* (but ཆེ་བ་ *ç̄e-ba* “great” is \**ç̄e-wa*\*); རྗེད་པ་ *rjed-pa* “to forget” is pronounced \**je-pa*\*; whilst རྟེན་པ་ *bye-ba* “to open” is pronounced \**je-wa*\*; \**འདོད་པ་* *dod-pa* “to wish” becomes \**dö-pa*\*, not \**dö-wa*\*. This persistency of the hard form of the affix is all the more striking as we have seen above that the usual tendency is to soften down such endings in speech, whilst retaining the original hard form in writing.

We have, further, a few names which correspond in pronunciation to the orthography. I have several times heard the monastery of རྩ་སྐྱུང་སྐྱུང་ *bras-spuñs* called \**brä-puñ*\*, whilst according to modern pronunciation \**dä-puñ*\* is the only correct form. Then the name of the celebrated lama རྩོམ་སྐྱུང་ *brom-ston* is usually pronounced \**brom-ton*\* although \**dom-ton*\* would be correct, and is indeed said by the

<sup>1</sup> S. Ch. Das, loc. cit.

<sup>2</sup> Dictionary, p. xv.

uneducated class of Ladaki lamas.<sup>1</sup> Very interesting is the Tibetan name of Vajra-pani རྩམ་ན་རྩེ་རྩེ་པོ་ *p'yag-na rdo-rje*. In this name the second and fourth syllables are usually discarded, and the name is then pronounced \**č'ak-dor*.\* The final *r* is evidently the *r* superscribed on the *j*, which was originally pronounced and has remained attached to the previous syllable. At present all knowledge of this etymology is so thoroughly lost, that the name is now often written རྩམ་རྩེ་རྩེ་པོ་ *p'yag-rdor*. Exceedingly common in names is the pronunciation \**gyam-t'so*\* for རྩེ་མཚོ་ *rgya-mt'so*, usually pronounced \**gya-t'so*\*.

The central dialects contain other examples of cases, when the first syllable of a composite word ends in a vowel, and in consequence a mute prefix belonging to the second syllable becomes audible as part of the first syllable. Thus དབུ་མཚའ་དྲུག་ *dbu-mdzad* “precentor” should be pronounced \**u-dzat*,\* but is just as often pronounced \**um-dzat*.\* This pronunciation is considered vulgar in U and Tsang.

Examples of this kind are, however, of more frequent occurrence in the western dialects, especially in Ladak, where they are not at all vulgar. Most numerals are invariably treated in this way, e. g., བརྩ་གཡུ་མ་ *bču-gsum* “13” is \**čug-sum*;\* བརྩ་བཞི་ *bču-bzhi* “14” is \**čub-zhi*;\* ལྷ་བརྩ་ *lña-bču* “50” is \**ñab-ču*;\* དབུ་བརྩ་གོ་བརྩེད་ *dgu-bču-go-brgyad* “98” is \**gub-ču-gob-gyat*.\* The same thing is common in nouns and adjectives, e. g., སྐྱ་མཚྭ་ལྷ་ *sna-mt'sul* “nose” is pronounced \**nam-t'sul*\* instead of \**na-t'sul*,\* as would be required by present-day usage; ཁ་ལཔ་གས་ *k'a-lpags* “lip” is \**kal-pak(s)*\* instead of \**k'a-pak*;\* བཀའ་བཤེན་ *bka-bkyon* “blame” is \**kap-kyon*\* as well as \**ka-kyon*;\* ཡ་མཚོ་མ་ *ya-mt'san* “wonderful” is \**yam-t'san*\* as well as \**ya-t'san*;\* མཚོ་དྲེན་ *mč'od-rten* “stupa, tope” is \**č'or-ten*,\* etc. The last mentioned word is important, as at the present day *rten* is always pronounced \**sten*\* in Ladak, and we should therefore expect a contraction into \**č'os-ten*.\* That the *r* has maintained itself under such circumstances is strong evidence, that *rten* was originally pronounced as spelled.

It is in such compounds that the letter འ་ is still discernible in pronunciation, although it has otherwise completely disappeared from

<sup>1</sup> S. Ch. Das in the “Journ. Buddh. Text. Soc.” 1893, pts. 1 & 2, always writes “Bromton,” and has informed me that he usually adopts the phonetic spelling of names.

the Ladaki and most other western dialects. Jaeschke<sup>1</sup> mentions དགེ་འདུན་ *dge-<sub>o</sub>dun* “the sangha,” བཀའ་འབྲུག་ *bka-<sub>o</sub>bum* “the 100,000 Precepts” (name of a book), and བཀའ་འགྲུའ་ *bka-<sub>o</sub>gyur* “the translated word” (*i. e.*, the Buddhist canon), pronounced respectively \**gen-dun*,\* \**kam-bum*,\* and \**kañ-gyur*,\* as probably the only examples. To these, however, must be added: མཎ་འ་འགོ་མ་ *mk'a-<sub>o</sub>gro-ma* “Dakini,” pronounced \**k'an-<sub>o</sub>ma*\*; འོ་འཇུང་ *.o-<sub>o</sub>t'uñ* “suckling child,” pronounced \**om-t'uñ*\*; ལྷ་འདྲེ་ *lha-<sub>o</sub>dre* “hobgoblin,” pronounced \**lhan-<sub>o</sub>de*\*; སྐེ་འཇུག་ *ske-<sub>o</sub>jus* “embrace,” pronounced \**skyen-jus*\*; སྐུ་འདྲེ་ *sku-<sub>o</sub>dra* “image,” pronounced \**skun-<sub>o</sub>da*\*; ས་འཇུག་ *sa-<sub>o</sub>gul* “earthquake,” pronounced \**sam-gul*\* or \**sañ-gul*\*; སྐྱིལ་རྩ་འབྲུ་ *sdig-rwa-<sub>o</sub>bu* “scorpion,” pronounced \*(s)*dig-ram-bu*\*; རྩ་འབྲུ་ *c'u-<sub>o</sub>bu*, “water-insect,” pronounced \**c'um-bu*\*. A few more instances may still exist, in which འ་ has become *m* or *n* in the western dialects, thus showing that it is neither a mere orthographical sign nor simply a basis for a vowel,—this latter want being supplied by ཨ་<sup>2</sup>—but that it formerly had a distinctly audible pronunciation.

In connection with this appearance of otherwise mute letters it is worthy of note that in the Ladaki dialect the stem of the Perf. tense in the literary language has become the sole stem of the verb, and is used for the Present and Future, as well as for the Perfect. In many cases this peculiarity is not noticeable in pronunciation, and scarcely any, even educated, Ladaki are aware of it. But it occasionally becomes apparent in compounds, *e. g.*, མཎ་འ་སྐྱོར་ *mgo-skor* “deceit,” is usually pronounced \**go-(s)kor*\*. In writing Ladaki dialect, however, *mgo-bskor* would have to be written and though the prefix *b* indicating the Perf. tense is not ordinarily heard, it becomes audible in the compound substantive, which is pronounced \**gob-skor*\*.

In all the cases cited the mute consonant re-asserts itself in compounds. In Ladak, however, many consonants, mute in the central dialects, are distinctly heard even in simple words. Foremost amongst these is initial *s*, which is almost invariably pronounced in Ladak.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Phonetik*, p. 172.

<sup>2</sup> Jaeschke, *Dictionary*, p. xiv.

<sup>3</sup> The Ladaki go so far in their preference for *s* as to pronounce it even where the orthography does not authorize it. རྩ་འབྲུ་ *rt* is almost always, and འཇུག་ very often pronounced \**st*\*. Hence the Ladaki says: \**sta*\* “horse;” \**stags*\* “sign;” \**stat-<sub>o</sub>ces*\* “to deliver;” \**ma-stogs-te*\* “besides.” Final *s* is also rarely mute.

So: སྐྱ་ *sman* “medicine,” སྤྱ་ *spu* “hair,” སྤར་ག་ *star-ga* “walnut,” are all pronounced with an audible *s* in Ladak, whilst the *s* is usually mute in Lahaul. The same takes place with other initials, e. g., བརྩུངས་ཅེས་ *brduñs-ces* “to beat,” བཟུངས་ཅེས་ *blta-ces* “to look,” ལྷགས་ *lçags* “iron,” ལྷ་ *lçe* “tongue,” are often pronounced \**rduñs*, *lta* (sometimes *sta*!) *lçak*, *lçe*\* respectively, instead of \**duñ*, *ta*, *çak*, *çe*\* as would be usual.

Another observation is connected with consonants having subscribed *y*, the so-called *ya-tags*. In the ordinary pronunciation both of the central and western dialects, རྩ་ *py*, རྩ་ *p'y* and རྩ་ *by* become respectively \**ç*\*, \**ç'*\*, and \**j*\*. In Ladak and Lahaul however, རྩ་ *py'ed* “half” is not \**ç'et*\* but \**p'et*\*; རྩ་ *p'yis* “duster, rag” is not \**ç'is*\* but \**p'is*\*; \* also in compounds as ལག་རྩ་ *lag-p'yis* “towel,” སྐྱ་རྩ་ *sna-p'yis* “handkerchief,” etc., which are pronounced \**lak-p'is*, (*s*)*na-pis*,\* etc. Similarly རྩ་པ་ *p'yi-pa* “heathen, non-Buddhist,” is not \**ç'i-pa*\* but \**p'i-pa*\*; རྩ་མ་ *bye-ma* “sand,” is not \**je-ma*\* but \**be-ma*\*; རྩ་པ་ *byed-pa* “to make,” is not \**jet-pa*\* but \**bet-pa*\*.<sup>1</sup> The verb རྩ་པ་ *p'yin-pa* “to arrive,” is unknown in Ladak and Lahaul (?), but is used in Spiti as \**p'in-pa*,\* not as \**ç'in-pa*,\* which would be the regular pronunciation. A similar usage prevails with some words with subscribed *r*, the so-called *ra-tags*, e. g., the root བརྩ་ *brañ* is correctly pronounced \**dañ*\*. So in Ladak in the word བརྩ་ས་ *brañ-sa* “dwelling,” pronounced \**dañ-sa*\*. But བོ་བརྩ་ *p'o-brañ* “residence,” is pronounced in Ladak very often \**p'ob-rañ*,\* and ལྷ་བརྩ་ *lha-brañ* “idol-house,” is often pronounced \**lhab-rañ*.<sup>2</sup> All the examples cited from the Ladak dialect are not a peculiarity of educated people, who might affect an artificial and refined mode of speech, but are in daily use amongst the illiterate mass of the people.

<sup>1</sup> This word is rather interesting on account of its widely spread use, for \**bet-pa*\* is in common use in Kunawur, seldom (I believe) heard in Lahaul, and quite unknown in Ladak, except in two or three villages in which it is in constant use.

<sup>2</sup> The two examples given are certainly compound nouns, but it will be observed that the analogy with the compounds noted above is not exact. In the former mute letters become audible; in these latter cases the labial *b*, has assumed a dental from *d*, and cannot therefore be said to be mute. It is just as easy to say \**p'o-drañ*, *p'o-dañ* or *p'o-rañ*\* as to say \**p'ob-rañ*,\* and would be in accordance with modern pronunciation. The same irregularity occurs in a place-name in Sikkim. See J. A. S. B. 1891. Part 1, No. 2, p. 69.

The tendency to pronounce usually mute letters is most marked in the most westerly provinces. In Purig superscribed and subscribed letters are pronounced exactly as written. Hence we have རྩུག་པོ་ *p'yug-po* "rich," གང་མོ་ *grañ-mo* "cold," རྩུ་བུ་ *p'ru-gu* "child," སྒྲོམ་ *sgrom* "box," གྲི་ *gri* "knife," འབྲི་ཅན་ *bri-čas* "to write," སྙིའ་ *snyiñ* "heart," རྩུག་ *k'rag* "blood," the pronunciation of which is \**p'yuk-po, grañ-mo, p'ru-gu, sgrom, gri, bri-čas, snyiñ, k'rak,*\* whilst \**ç'uk-po, ðañ-mo, t'u-gu; ðom, ði, ði-čas, nyiñ, t'ak*\* would be the usual pronunciation. Of Baltistan it can be said that every letter is pronounced in one way or another. Thus<sup>1</sup> བདུན་ *bdun* "7" is \**vdun*\* instead of \**dun*\*; \**དཔེ་ཅེ་* *dpe-ça* "book" is \**χpe-ça*\* instead of \**pe-ça*\* (Ladak: \**spe-ça*\*). \**དུལ་* *dñul* "silver" is \**χñul*\* instead of \**ñul*\* (Ladak: \**mul*\*). In Baltistan and Purig the sign ར (wa-zur), which has otherwise quite disappeared, but is supposed to be equivalent to *w*<sup>2</sup> has remained in the word རྩུ་ *rtswa* "grass," which is pronounced \**rtsoa*\* or \**stsoa,*\*<sup>3</sup> the usual pronunciation being \**tsa.*\*

The evidence of the Purig and Balti dialects appears to me to be of the greatest importance, for the following reasons:—Firstly, both districts accepted Mohammedanism in lieu of Buddhism at a very early date<sup>4</sup> and by so doing emancipated themselves from the influence of Lhasa and cut themselves off from the development of the other Tibetan races. Secondly, from the introduction of Islam probably dates the neglect of literature. Tibetan literature was almost entirely Buddhist and was necessarily driven out by the change of religion, whilst Islam had no vernacular literature to offer and made no attempts to provide any.<sup>5</sup> At present the inhabitants of Purig and Baltistan are absolutely

<sup>1</sup> Jaeschke, Dictionary, p. xix f.

<sup>2</sup> Jaeschke, Phonetik, p. 162 f.

<sup>3</sup> Jaeschke, Dictionary, p. xix. writes \**rtsoá*\* I have, however, usually heard \**rtsóa,*\* with a distinct accent on the o which represents the lost *wa-zur*.

<sup>4</sup> The exact or even approximate date is not yet ascertained as far as I am aware. Cunningham (Ladak, p. 30 f), gives a list of Mohammedan rajahs of Khapalor in Baltistan, the 39th of whom is dated about A. D. 1410. Cunningham points out that this date coincides with the death of Sikander Butshikan of Kashmir, and is inclined to put the conversion of Baltistan at this date. He also points out that some of the persons named amongst the first 39 rajahs are palpably fabulous, and that, therefore, the list is open to objections.

<sup>5</sup> The Purig people are well acquainted with the *pre-Buddhistic* legend of King Gesar (cf. J. A. S. B. 1891, Pt. 1, No. 3, p. 116, Note 13.), although they have no written copies of the epic but rely on oral transmission only. The folk-lore

illiterate.<sup>1</sup> Thirdly, Jaeschke has already drawn attention to the fact, that the dialect of Khams and that of Baltistān are very similar. He says:<sup>2</sup> “The prefixes and the superscribed consonants, for the most part, are still sounded at each extremity of the whole territory, within which the language is spoken, both on the western and the eastern frontier, alike in Khams, which borders on China, and in Balti, which merges into Kashmir. Moreover, in both localities the same minor irregularities occur, transgressions against an exact rendering of the pronunciation according to the letters, the same frequent transformations of the tenues into the aspiratal, *g* and *d* becoming *γ* or *χ*, *b* becoming *w*. Now, about twenty degrees of longitude separate Balti from Khams.”

On reviewing the observations made as to the dialects spoken by various Tibetan tribes, we find that cases, where spelling and pronunciation are closely allied, in opposition to current rules of pronunciation, are of frequent occurrence. They occur, not in the language of the higher classes, but of the ordinary peasant, and cannot therefore be explained as the result of artificial education. They are found in least numbers in the central dialects, and increase in the dialects east and west of Lhasa in proportion to the distance from that centre of Buddhism. Certainly the simplest explanation of these apparent vagaries is, that we have in them relics of a former universal pronunciation, which has in course of time been greatly modified, sometimes out of all recognition. We are therefore led to precisely the same view as was arrived at after considering the literary language, *viz.*, that the orthography as it stands represents the pronunciation current at the time of its introduction.

But there is yet another piece of evidence as to the original pronunciation of Tibetan, which adds its weight to the arguments already advanced. Jaeschke has noted some most remarkable points of agreement between the supposed original pronunciation of Tibetan and the Bunan language, spoken besides Tibetan and Hindī in Lahaul. I give his remarks in an abbreviated translation.<sup>3</sup> “According to the assertion of the inhabitants Bunan has had a much greater extension

of Purig and Baltistan has not yet been thoroughly explored, but the present generation are quite ignorant of the fact that their ancestors were once Buddhists.

<sup>1</sup> They know infinitely more about King Gesar than about Muḥammad, and a Purig man once informed me, that Jesus Christ and Muḥammad would shortly descend from heaven, and, proclaiming a Jihad, would prepare the world for the second advent of Gesar!

<sup>2</sup> Dictionary, p. xii.

<sup>3</sup> Phonetik, p. 174 ff.

than it at present has, even within the memory of living man. In a slightly different dialectical form it occurs again in a small district in Kunawur, being separated from Lahaul by large districts where Hindi or Tibetan dialects are spoken. This is the so-called Tibarskad, *v.* Cunningham, Ladak, *p.* 397 *ff.* As regards grammatical construction and the majority of vocables (especially such primitive words and ideas, which every language must possess previous to the development of civilisation) it certainly does not belong to the Tibetan family. But it has accepted a large number of Tibetan words; and whilst part of these has the original pronunciation corresponding to the old orthography, another part has the now usual pronunciation. The dialect of Tibetan (now) spoken in Lahaul by the same persons (as those who speak Bunan) *is more nearly related by far to the dialects of the surrounding districts and to that of central Tibet than the first class of Tibetan words which have found their way into Bunan.* These latter point to a much earlier period of the language. In speaking Tibetan the Lahauli uses, *e. g.*, \**č'ug-po*\* for "rich;" if speaking Bunan he says \**p'yug-po*\* without knowing that both are one and the same (Tibetan) word ཕུག་པོ་ *p'yug-po*." Of further examples given by Jaeschke the following are the most striking. In speaking Bunan the Lahauli says: \**kres*\* "hunger" (Tibetan འཕྲུལ་པ་ *bkres*, usually pronounced \**tes*\*), and \**log-čum*\* "to read" (Tibetan ལྟོག་པ་ *klog-pa*, usually pronounced \**lok-pa*\*); he is, however, unaware that these Bunani words are borrowed from Tibetan, and therefore when speaking Tibetan he uses ལྟོགས་གྲི་ *ltogs-gri* (pronounced \**tog-ri*\*) for "hunger" and གསེན་ཅེས་ *γsil-čes* (pronounced \**sil-če*\*) for "to read." In speaking Bunan he says \**gram-pa*\* "cheek" (Tibetan : འགམ་པ་ *gram-pa*), \**gyogs-pa*\* "quick" (Tibetan : མགྱོགས་པ་ *mgyogs-pa*), \**p'yag-p'ul-čum*\* "to adore" (Tibetan : ཕྱལ་ཕྱལ་པ་ *p'yag-p'ul-ba*); in speaking Tibetan he says: \**dam-pa*, *gyok-pa*, *č'ak-p'ul-če*.\*

Against all this mass of evidence tending to prove that Tibetan orthography was intended to represent the spoken word, we have really, as far as I know, only two arguments, firstly, some peculiarities in the transcription of Sanscrit words, and secondly, that the dialect especially of U-Tsang, has lost all traces of this original pronunciation. This fact is certainly very striking, and is probably almost, if not quite, without a parallel. Still, considering all that must be said on the other side, it would seem that we must really accept the present orthography as a fairly correct representation of Tibetan pronunciation of the 7th or 8th century A. D. Indeed the great variety of prefixes, etc., employed

leads us to conclude further, that the orthography was carefully and accurately fitted on to the pronunciation, that in short we have a practically phonetical transcript of the language as spoken by T'on-mi Sam-bho-ta and his immediate successors.

orth. is pract.  
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the language  
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This does not preclude the possibility that the powers of certain letters, more especially *d*, *b*, *g*, have undergone some changes. It seems not quite improbable that these three letters were originally pronounced  $\theta$ ,  $v$ ,  $\chi$ , and even then we have no explanation for the fact that the juxtaposition of *d* and *b*, (དབ) has the effect of mutually neutralizing the letters, so that the letter ཨ 'a' is the result, *i. e.*, a spiritus lenis<sup>1</sup>. It is, however, not possible now to trace these changes. Those interested in the matter will find hints in Jaeschke's essays. But Jaeschke himself did not venture to express any decided opinion on the materials he had to go upon, and it cannot be said that our knowledge of Tibetan has been materially increased since his time. A careful examination of the peculiarities of dialects spoken in secluded valleys of Nepal, Sikkim and Bhotan would no doubt produce more material. The dialects of Khams and of the nomads of the plateaus in northern Tibet have also not been explored.

Jaeschke

In a mountainous country dialectical variations are as a rule numerous, and in Tibetan-speaking countries not only every valley, but even neighbouring villages in the same valley have slightly diverging pronunciations and expressions. These minutiae are most important for a study of the development of the dialects and of the phonetics of the Tibetan language. They are, however, only obtainable during the course of many years' residence in the country. When Tibet is to open to Europeans for free travelling and permanent residence, we may hope to gain much fuller information, and our present views may possibly require to be totally changed.

<sup>1</sup> Jaeschke. Dictionary p. xv. This is not, however, always the case, for དབང dbaŋ "power" is usually pronounced \*waŋ\*; and in the Ladak dialect དབྱུག་པོ་ dbul-po "poor" is pronounced \*bul-po,\* certainly very rarely, but the word is not commonly used.